

Navigating the internet use as the encounter of the new literacy studies for periphery EFL teachers: A critical self-reflection

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The internet has been an integral part for most EFL teachers nowadays. Those teachers make use of the internet to help them at least search for appropriate materials for their classroom teaching. Some others use the internet to discuss particular courses outside the classroom time. However, the fact that the internet has been of central use, the research on it in relation to literacy (read, write, research and publish) for EFL teacher personal and professional development in developing countries is under explored (Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni, 2002, cited in Cahyani & Cahyono, 2012). In that regard, this article is to address that critical issue. As an EFL teacher from the developing country myself, my personal and professional experiences and my encounters with colleagues on the internet use inform my subjectivities in writing this article. As the current globalized world requires teachers to have multi-literacy skills, I deliberately frame the internet use within New Literacy Studies (NLS) which sees literacy as social practice (Street 1985 cited in Street, 2003), an event and set of practices, a global and local practice, faith based and critical (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). The foci of my discussion will be on the use of internet for the sake of teaching resources, research purposes, expansion of social network and professional development.

Key words: New literacy studies, Multiple literacies, EFL teachers, Internet use

Introduction

The discussion on the use of internet is premised on the fact that globally connected world enables EFL teachers, regardless of the geographical areas, to learn from one another (UN Development Report 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Framing the internet use within the NLS might help periphery EFL teachers to be informed on resources for teaching as well as for their professional development.

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How I make use of the internet in my EFL classroom and for my professional need

When (a) *looking for teaching resources* and (b) *research purposes*, teachers could benefit from Google search by typing the key words, looking for free accessed journals available from directory open access journal (www.doaj.org) and other free downloadable journals such as *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching* (National University of Singapore), *Language Discourse and Society*, *3L Language Linguistic and Literature* etc. and free downloadable articles from the scholars' personal webs/academia.edu, corpora such as British National Corpus (BNC), Contemporary Corpus of American Society (COCA), British Academic Written English (BAWE), British Academic Spoken English (BASE), Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), Asian Corpus of English (ACE) scholars talk on *You Tube* related to Applied Linguistic concepts in the classroom, or directly contacting the scholars via email. When I was teaching *Applied Linguistic course* in 2012 I used *You Tube* to help me explain Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) by getting the students watch and listen CLT concept presented by Professor Jack Richard. This really helped students to understand CLT concept much better as they learned from 'live lecture' from the professor along with the multimodal movements of the examples provided. *You Tube* made my teaching a lot easier.

I also introduced BNC and COCA Webs to students when teaching Writing II course back in early 2013. From these corpora students can learn a variety of things e.g. from BNC students can learn fiction, newspaper, academic writing, and spoken conversation (<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/corpus/index.xml?ID=products#sampler>) etc. COCA is very helpful for students as it helps readers to provide the meaning of vocabulary in diverse contexts. We just need to type a specific word in the search column, and then examples pop up. I recently typed the word 'venerate' in the word column, then 86 examples where we can examine the meaning of the word 'venerate' within 86 examples with its own context (<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>). In addition to this, COCA also provides the search space for users to spot the word and its phrase. E.g. I currently typed the word 'generate', 23832 samples occur with 1888 (spoken), 821 (fiction), 5792 (magazine), 4280 (newspaper) and 11051 (academic) (<http://www.wordandphrase.info/frequencyList.asp>). In *Asian Corpus of English* (ACE), the readers can find five different categories such as: professional research and science, leisure, professional organisation, education and professional business (<http://corpus.ied.edu.hk/ace/index.php?m=album&a=index>) where visitors of this corpus can read the transcript of specific conversation available for example ASEAN tourist sights and food.

Making use of the different types of corpora mentioned above students will not only learn vocabulary, phrase, collocations, but also cross cultural communication, discourse and others. Thus teacher's familiarity with the corpora will be useful in his/her classroom teaching whatever the course is. Furthermore, those corpora are the resources for research. If we have not got any idea of what kinds of research we can make through corpora, we can read the existing studies written on the special corpora. ACE has for example provides a list of publication related to ACE project (<http://corpus.ied.edu.hk/ace/About.html>). Then we might wish to extend the research from the existing studies. Other from corpora we can make use of www.doaj.org source to download free and reliable materials for research purposes. We can just type 'Linguistics and English Language Teaching' in the www.doaj.org search to specify the domain and it provides 2940 results

(http://doaj.org/search?source={%22query%22:{%22query_string%22:{%22query%22:%22Linguistics%20and%20language%20teaching%22,%22default_operator%22:%22AND%22}}}%22VJ4vCfGUg). There are two types of journals offered by directory open access journal (doaj), free of charge and charged publications. I am usually interested with 'no charge' journals as these are mostly not a bogus journal while charging the fees for publication are usually predatory journals (Renandya, 2014). I also usually used www.doaj.org to look for new reliable journals and <http://www.baal.org.uk/calls.html> for call for papers for journals or book chapters.

In addition to the outlet for journal publications, periphery EFL teachers need to understand the rank of journals in the field. To know this, they can visit http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?area=0&category=1203&country=all&year=2013&order=sjr&min=0&min_type=cd. In this web, they just can type the phrase 'language and linguistics'. This is important so that EFL teachers recognise which journals indexed by Scopus, Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) and others in the fields. Knowing the rank might be beneficial for EFL teachers to consider the degree of quality of the journals so that they have an informed choice when citing particular journals or when sending their manuscript to the journals.

To (c) *broaden my social network*, I joined Teacher Voices Professional Development (TVPD) Facebook group. Especially for TVPD, I mostly check it on a daily basis where I can follow a variety of information related to my research areas and interests. From this group, I learn many things such as: information on international conferences, call for papers for journals and book chapters, free download articles, discussion on teaching issues, debates among ELT scholars etc. I feel 'engaged' in this group as the founder is the friend of mine and I also know in person in the moderators. In addition to ELT teachers, researchers across the globe, there are also Indonesian teachers and ELT scholars who post current issues on Indonesian ELT where I can update the current information on ELT in Indonesian contexts. Furthermore, I created *academia.edu* account to display my published works as well as to follow ELT and Applied Linguistic scholars. Through this media, I am proud that my scholarly works can be freely accessed and read by people from different parts of the world. As of 27 December 2014 my article on non-native speaker is viewed by 2061 times and error analysis is viewed 2768 times. One of the benefits from using *academia.edu* is that we can see the country of origins of the viewers from the analytics overview (<https://victoria.academia.edu/Author/Analytics#/overview>). Apart from that, I also follow the ELT scholars and Applied Linguists such as Sarra Cotterall, Angel Lin, Ruth Wodak etc as they usually post their downloadable scholarly works so that I can benefit from them.

To develop (d) *my professionalism*, I use the internet to look for call for papers and book chapters and then consistently send my articles and continually use the internet to maintain contacts with journal editors for the update of the sent articles. My article on democratic online course (Wahyudi, 2014) which critiques the teaching of critical thinking through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) is the example for this.

The points (a)(b)(c) and (d) above, if seen from the five concepts of *New Literacy Studies*, (1) *social practice* (2) *an event and set of practices* (3) *a global and local practice* (4) *faith based* and (5) *critical* (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012) can be described as the following.

I do literacy as *social practice* for example when I am engaging my professional network through Teacher Voices Professional Development (TVPD) (see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/teachervoices/>). In this group, each member of TVPD

which consists of world scholars, teachers, and post-grad students share variety of issues that such as the current issues in particular English Language Teaching (ELT) and applied linguistic topics, teaching strategies, sharing info about national and international conferences, sharing the currently published papers and others. In this regard, the members of TV are able to comment to each other on those variety of issues, variety of socially situated practices. Siregar (2014) provides a summary of this TVPD group as a medium for professional development practice.

I practice literacy *as event and set of practices* as the activities I do from looking the materials for teaching, research purposes, professional network and professional development activities both constitute *events* and set of *integrated practices*. Each activity can be seen as an event when it is done separately from other activities e.g. only looking for materials from the internet and use it in the classroom. As a set of *integrated practices*, (a) to (d) are done as *an interconnected activity* e.g. I used the downloaded teaching materials to help me enrich my professional knowledge of teaching in the classroom. Furthermore, I used the classroom teaching experience as the resource for research (I wrote a chapter for an edited book which I based on personal teaching experience). Finally, I published my research paper to online journals (Wahyudi, 2014) and proposed articles for book chapters. In this regards, the activities that I did reflect *integrated activities*.

My international publications show that it is both *a global and local practice* as I at the same time refer to global theories and appropriate them my local context (Wahyudi, 2014), that's to say that I tried to personalise a global and local practice into my own personal experience because "all learning is contextualized" (Kennedy, 2011, p.13). In my case, I contextualized the learning to publish by exploring my experience of joining MOOCs and proposing its democratic form (Wahyudi, 2014). This is important to get my voice heard in international publication, I must write a cogent paper which do reflects my daily life teaching and learning practices, which in post modern views, must be idiosyncratic in comparison to others. In doing this, I am also inspired by former works in my field such as the shift paradigm of Teaching English to Speaker of Other Languages (TESOL) to Teaching English as Globalized Communication (TEGCOM) (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu & Riazi, 2002) and negotiating the local through English as Lingua Franca (Canagarajah, 2006) where the local could be used as the resource to negotiate the Centre discourses. Moreover, I am inspired by the post structural view, especially Michel Foucault's notion that truth is a historical category and knowledge is politically constructed (O'Farrell, 2005). Taking that academic and political stance, I finally found a space to voice out my 'local' knowledge.

Therefore, in English Language Teaching Research, I should look for the space to negotiate the centre English (UK and USA) and appropriate them in my own local context. I no longer see UK and USA English as superior to my language but rather I see it as "equal". In that regard, I do support the notion of Teaching English as Globalized Communication (TEGCOM) (Lin, Wang, Akamatsu & Riazi, 2002). Furthermore Canagarajah's problematization on the global versus the local in ELT is very inspiring that he said that basically all knowledge is locally situated. What made different is the 'claims' made by the centres (Canagarajah, 2002). In line with Canagarajah's locally situated knowledge and I finally also realized that 'context' matters.

The use of internet is also *faith based*. The idea of literacy as *faith based* stems from the idea that particular view of literacy is "linked with particular way of thinking" (Street, 1995 cited Pahl & Rowsell, 2012, p.10). The example of this was according to Street was *Maktab literacy*, the literacy associated with Islam and Qur'anic schools (Pahl

& Rowsell, 2012, p.10). The use of internet in Islam (my own context) can be considered as a medium to seek and share knowledge as *faith based*. In Islam, seeking knowledge is a compulsory for Muslim's men and women as stated in the following hadith¹ "seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim, and he who imparts knowledge to those who do not deserve it, is like one who puts a necklace of jewels, pearls and gold around the neck of swines" (narrated by Anas bin Malik) and also it is encouraged to teach/share the knowledge (share the knowledge even only one sentence) as reported in the following hadith "the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Convey (my teachings) to the people even if it were a single sentence, and tell others the stories of Bani Israel (which have been taught to you), for it is not sinful to do so. And whoever tells a lie on me intentionally, will surely take his place in the (Hell) Fire." (Sahih al-Bukhari 3461 reported by `Abdullah bin `Amr). In these contexts, both searching the materials from the internet and sharing knowledge publishing our research articles are in line with the above the command. And lastly, the use of internet involves literacy as *a critical concept*. One example of this literacy is when I select materials taken from different source of webs as I need to *judge* the reliable materials and unreliable materials available including who the writers are, from which publishers they are published, the level of analysis provided, whether particular articles are based on rigor methodological design etc.

To judge the reliable and reliable materials in the journals we need to be informed that the journals like *TESOL Quarterly*, *ELT Journal*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Discourse and Society* etc are the flagship journals in the fields. Looking at who are the members of editorial boards may also serve indication that particular journals are legitimate or not. The scholars such as Kumaravadivelu, Canagarajah, Candlin, Ruth Wodak, Rod Ellis, Jack Richard, Ken Hyland, Brian Paltridge, Brian Tomlinson etc are of course notable scholars in the fields. Thus the journals edited by these scholars are legitimate journals, including their own personal webs. This might be of general understanding for ELT teachers in the developed world but might not automatically so for EFL teachers in developing countries. Knowing legitimate publishers such as *Oxford University Press*, *Routledge*, *Cambridge University Press*, *Taylor and Francis*, *Palgrave Macmillan*, *Multilingual Matters*, *Continuum*, *Wiley*, *Basil Blackwell* etc. are very important as they apply rigorous screening before publishing books or journals. Further information about the legitimate publishers can be obtained from www.wokinfo.com (indexed by Thompson & Reuters). Other example of literacy as a critical concept is to judge the quality of the content of academic works is by looking at the alignment between the research questions, research approach and the methodology. If they do not mutually support each other than the quality of the paper should be questioned. Furthermore, we can also judge the level of analysis made by the writer. One of the simple ways to judge quality of analysis of ELT journals is to compare the quality of analysis of *TESOL Quarterly* journal with journals from the journals being investigated. Yet, the quality of analysis should not be exactly the same, but it should not be superficial, the thing which was claimed as "intellectual simplifier" (Shen, 2005, cited in Dervin & Ragnarsdóttir, 2014). Judging the quality of an article might be easy for the

¹ **Hadith** (/ˈhædɪθ/^[1] or /hɑːˈdiːθ/^[2] Arabic: حديث, plural: أحاديث, ahadith) are the collections of the reports claiming to quote what the prophet Muhammad said verbatim on any matter.^[3] The term comes from the Arabic meaning "report", "account" or "narrative". Hadiths are second only to the Quran in developing Islamic jurisprudence,^[4] and regarded as important tools for understanding the Quran and commentaries (tafsir) on it (Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith>).

experienced writer but not for the novice teachers. Joining TVPD is one of the solutions as the member can post questions related to whether or not journals or publishers are legitimate.

Conclusion

In summary, all the EFL teachers from periphery classroom (a developing country) need to understand the above issues in order to be the active agent in the digital age. Multi-literacy above is urgent for them as a media to help them find the materials for the classroom teaching, help them conduct research based on their classroom teaching experience, help them expand their professional networks by voicing out their classroom teaching insights for international publications and implement their spiritual and moral imperatives as the English Language Teaching is also forms of a spiritual practice (literacy as faith-based). My multiple literacy experiences, even though is situated in Indonesian context, might be considered for EFL teachers from other developing countries as they should undertake their professions in the interconnected world with the updated knowledge, skills and professionalism.

Recommendations

Teaching foreign language in the interconnected digital world requires EFL teachers to have multi-literacy skills including the use of internet to search for teaching resources, research purposes, expand the networks and use as a media to develop their professionalism. Further, to ground those multi literacy skills EFL teachers are advised to examine their multi-literacy as “a social practice, an event and set of practices, a global and local practice, faith based and critical” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012, p.2). Furthermore, to be more critical in examining their daily life literacy practices, they are advised to take benefits of post-colonial and post structural studies to interrogate the new forms of colonialism in the digital context (Panthee, 2012; Wahyudi, 2014). Moreover, using the post-colonial and post-structural studies, EFL teachers have wider spaces to show their agency, power and identity through an active negotiation, and or resistance to the centre English discourses.

EFL teachers should introduce literacy as *a critical concept* should also be introduced to students in the classroom so that the ELT classroom will not be trapped in the banking system of education (Freire, n/d), making the students the passive objects. Thus teachers should teach students through “dialogical way” in which the students have space to question, negotiate particular concepts given in the classroom.

In the digital age, periphery EFL teachers should be able to critically interrogate the new form of colonialism through technological design, cultural domination in ELT through web based resources, and teach deconstruction skills (Panthee, 2012; Wahyudi, 2014) so that students will be able to see what is beyond the materials presented including ideological and political agenda. Thus for EFL teachers from developing countries, a critical concept is necessary to learn and apply in their ELT classroom practices so that they will not be the passive agent but be able to engage in “post-colonial performativity” (Pennycook, 2000, p.116), being able to negotiate, subvert or resist the global domination of English in EFL setting.

More studies are required to explore the role of EFL teachers in developing countries especially how far they can empower themselves personally and professionally through the use of internet as *literacy*: read, write, communicate, research and publish

(Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni, 2002, cited in Cahyani & Cahyono, 2012) and how EFL teachers make use of internet in the *New Literacy Studies* which sees Literacy as: social practice, event and set of practices, global and local practice, faith based and critical (Pahl & Rowsell, 2012). Most importantly how the uses of internet enable EFL teachers in periphery to participate in knowledge production through publications so that their voices can be heard and represented.

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